

To the Chair and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

My name is Ramona K. Anderson and I am attending today's meeting in support of the Connecticut Commission on Children. I am a resident of the city of New Britain and currently hold the position of Immunization Action Plan Coordinator at the New Britain Health Department. In my role, I provide education and outreach services to the children and families of New Britain, Plainville, and Newington.

A key role of public health departments is to lead efforts to mobilize communities around important health issues. In that effort, there are many times we have been asked to collaborate with hospitals, public clinics, private medical providers, social service agencies, and school systems to ensure the prevention of vaccine-preventable diseases. Partnering with many other programs, we have had to address the needs of our children and families, specifically their inability to access care, lack of education in preventive care, and cultural barriers. At other times, there has been a need to address system change, so that existing barriers in the healthcare system can be removed.

Our past relationship with the Connecticut Commission on Children has provided a valuable service to our mission. I have had the benefit of working with Pat Estill of the Commission since the late 1990's. The first large-scale initiative that I participated in with the Commission that directly impacted change was an immunization workshop entitled "*Reaching the Hard-to-Reach: Ensuring All Children Are Immunized, Healthy and Safe*". This event brought together representatives from the medical, educational, and local government to create a team approach that helped us do a more effective job in our community.

Two years ago, I participated with others in the state in a focus group held by the Commission that addressed the needs of the Connecticut Immunization Registry and Tracking System. This led to a better understanding of what the immunization registry can provide to state residents and an increase in promotional and educational interventions with the public.

In the past few years, the Connecticut Commission on Children has partnered with the Department of Public Health in presenting "Lunch and Learn" workshops for Connecticut pediatricians and their staff. These presentations covered topics that included health, safety, and learning for CT's children. This enabled my work with these offices to reach a new level of cooperation and support for our common goals.

Last year, the Connecticut Commission on Children and its partners created and released *Connecticut's Playbook for Prevention*, a "game plan" that parents, educators, care providers, and policymakers can follow to ensure all Connecticut children grow into happy, healthy, and productive adults. The Playbook's 10 easy-to-read sections give parents, other family members, educators, health-care professionals, day care providers, towns and cities, state leaders, and the public ideas about what they can do to address our most important children's issues. This has proven itself to be an invaluable resource.

Over the past 12 years, Connecticut has ranked among the top five states in the nation for on-time childhood immunizations. In 2008, officials of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) traveled to Hartford to honor the state for its success. The state, in turn, honored 16 "champions" - doctors, nurses, office managers, and Immunization Action Plan coordinators from across Connecticut who worked especially hard to ensure good health for our children. The event was held here in the LOB and helped to showcase these efforts to the state and the nation. The Connecticut Commission on Children was as much a part of this success as all the medical providers assembled.

Their extensive expertise in providing a focus on the health of children has benefited the residents of our state and empowered those of us who work along side them to better our efforts. The Commission on Children has produced fact sheets on an assortment of children's issues, including bullying, lead poisoning, obesity, parent engagement, poverty, prevention, and reading.

We are proud to continue our support of the Connecticut Commission on Children and hope to again collaborate with them to assist our children and families to be healthy and educated members of our community. We would be pleased to have the opportunity to continue to partner with the Connecticut Commission on Children to enhance the lives of residents in our city and throughout the state of Connecticut.